

COMMUNICATIONS.

ENGINEER DEPARTMENT, U. S. N.

February 15th, 1844.

To the Hon. WM. W. MCKAIG,

House of Delegates, Md.

SIR:—Your's requesting information as to the probable amount of coal required for the Naval service of the United States, has been received, and would have been more promptly answered, had not a call of similar import been made by Congress, but could not be answered for want of the necessary information from Navy agents, and from other sources.

The resolutions of the House of Representatives were referred to my Department, and the report made thereon would have furnished you with all the information required. In the absence of these details, I will submit a few remarks which will enable you to form a correct opinion as to the quantity of coal most likely to be required at the Navy Yards and by the War steamers of the United States.

There are now in the service of the United States, five War steamers, and four heavy Iron steamers now building. Taking for example a steam ship of the class of the Missouri. When she left for Alexandria in Egypt, she received on board seven hundred tons of Cumberland coal; at Fayal she took 200 tons more; at Gibraltar, when the fatal accident occurred which caused her destruction, she was about taking in 300 tons more, making in all 1,200 tons of coal requisite for her outward bound voyage. It is true that the consumption of coal is very great, but there is no one of the War steamers, in proportion to its size, consumes less. Every effort is making by the Department to diminish the consumption, and if this be effected, the number of War steamers will be increased.

This would be unquestionably the policy of the United States. Great Britain has now about 124 War Steamers, France from 65 to 70, and even the Pasha of Egypt has thrice our number. Our entire Southern coast from the Chesapeake Bay to the mouths of the Mississippi, must be defended by heavy Steam batteries and War steamers. All attacks on the part of an approaching enemy